

The Doc Is In :

World Combat League

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An old adage states, "The only constant in life is change." Nowhere is that more apparent than in the world of martial arts.

I started studying the arts in April 1974, a time that preceded the lawsuit mania so prevalent in today's society. The overwhelming majority of students were teenagers and adult young men. Testosterone ruled the day and the training reflected that. It was very hard, sometimes even brutal. Open tournament competition was frequently held on hardwood floors and cement. The rules not only permitted sweeps and groin strikes, but encouraged them. Headgear, hand and foot pads were as yet unknown. Consequently, major injuries were commonplace, and just accepted as character building and part of the learning process for becoming skilled enough and tough enough for becoming a black belt.

One of the most outstanding competitors of the day was none other than Chuck Norris. That's right, the same Chuck Norris you know as the movie and television action star. In fact, he was the undefeated World Professional Middleweight Karate Champion from 1968 until 1974 when he retired. In 1968, he was inducted into the Black Belt Hall of Fame as Fighter of the Year. In 1975, he was again inducted into the Hall as Instructor of the Year. And, in 1977, he was honored as Man of the Year.

Despite experiencing fame and fortune unknown to most, Chuck has never lost touch with the martial arts community. Over the past three decades he has been a frequent attendee at full contact, muay Thai, and mixed martial arts events. So, it's not surprising that he has come full circle and is the creative force behind the World Combat League (WCL).

The WCL is strictly a team event, each team consisting of five male and one female fighter representing different weight classes. Much like a football game, the contest has a first half and a second half. Each contestant fights three minutes in each half. With each match being only three rounds, the rules and refereeing are designed to motivate each fighter to fight every second of every round. Towards that end, strict rules are enforced against, HOLDING, CLINCHING, STALLING and PASSIVITY.

Each individual contest is judged according to the following priority based criteria.

1. Number of Knockdowns
2. Extent of Damage Inflicted.
3. Number of Clean Strikes Scored
4. Kicking Effectiveness.
5. Aggressiveness.

Each round is scored according to a "five point must" system, the winner of the round receiving five points, the opponent receiving four or less. In the event of a knockout, the winner receives five points and the loser zero. At the conclusion of each round the three judges scores are registered and combined, and then added to the total team points from the previous rounds. The team with the highest total after all competitors have fought wins the competition.

I know what you're thinking, "it sounds good on paper but will it really work?" The answer is a resounding, YES! I know this to be true because I had the honor, along with my friend, Cecil Peoples, to referee the inaugural WCL event held at the Dallas Convention Center, Dallas, Texas, on 10/08/05. By all accounts it was a resounding success. Think of Jet Li on speed and you've got the idea. Non-stop action was delivered with every kick and punch known to mankind. For the record, the Houston Enforcers beat the Los Angeles Stars 126 to 121. The other half of the double header had the Dallas Dragons whipping the Oklahoma City Destroyers 196 to 153.

The next event is tentatively scheduled for Las Vegas, Nevada in early 2006. Chuck's goal is to expand the teams of the WCL to twenty-four cities in North America, then internationally to sixteen teams in Europe and sixteen teams in Asia.

It remains to be seen whether or not the public will embrace the WCL, however, I for one certainly hope so. I believe that it compliments the more hardcore disciplines of Muay Thai and Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) by providing the traditional martial arts community a vehicle for displaying their top competitors. Also, since it is TV friendly, maybe we will see less Bass fishing, rope skipping, dart competition, and hopefully, hot dog eating competition.

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